

# **Department of Mental Health**

## *A Vision for the New Department of State Hospitals*

### **Background**

- In January, Governor Brown proposed creating a new Department of State Hospitals to provide an enhanced focus on the hospitals and psychiatric programs providing in-patient mental health services in California.
- The Department of Mental Health (DMH) brought in a transition team of experts to identify problems and recommend solutions for establishing the new department.

### **Problems and Challenges**

- The transition team identified a number of system-wide problems including: increased patient aggression and violence; increased operational costs and significant overspending; inadequate data, tracking, and reporting systems; and inflexible treatment models and redundant staff work.

### **Actions for Success**

- From this extensive transition report, DMH leadership has worked with hospital administrators and clinicians to find solutions and key investments focusing on the new department's three central priorities:
  1. *Improve mental health outcomes*
  2. *Increase worker and patient safety*
  3. *Ensure Fiscal Transparency and Accountability*
- Improving the state hospitals is a long-term process, but the department is taking action now. Some key changes that will begin as early as January 6, 2012 include:
  - Modified mail services, streamlined documentation, and reduced layers of management
  - Flexible staffing ratios, focusing on front-line staff, and redirecting staff to direct patient care
  - New models for contracting, purchasing, and reducing operational expenses
- In addition, DMH is working with CalOSHA to improve security policies and procedures, piloting an Enhanced Treatment Unit at Atascadero, implementing a new alarm system at Napa, and proposing new alarm systems at Patton and Metro state hospitals.

### **Responsible Next Steps**

- DMH operational improvements will result in decreased overtime, contract costs, and other savings. The department's goal is to provide employees with as many options as possible so that we can potentially achieve these significant savings without layoffs.
- This is the first step for the new department to work with hospital leaders and employees, the Legislature, and labor organizations to work collaboratively to improve state hospitals in these challenging fiscal times.